



Sales Managers, Know Your Power!

By Jeffrie Story

There are probably days in which you, the hard-working, dedicated sales manager, wonder, "Am I really making any difference in performance and results?"

The answer is yes. Overwhelmingly yes.

You, more than any other leader of your company, set the tone, or culture, for your group. Is it cohesive or disruptive? Focused or disjointed? Positive or pessimistic? *You* can decide, and you can lead accordingly.

The Gallup Organization has done in-depth research about managers' impact on top sales performers and salespeople in general. Let's focus on top producers.

One of its findings is that sales managers have a tremendous effect on retaining top performers. These top salespeople apparently are confident enough of their skills that they won't stick around if they feel their manager is impeding their earnings. But with a good manager, they stay!

Managers also have a big impact on the performance of top producers.

Good managers help them flourish. With bad managers, their results can decline. What's scary is that even with average managers, top performers sell less.

How do top sales reps determine whether their manager is good? Is it whether they like them? Is it whether the manager springs for bagels?

No. Gallup found that sales managers are "good" when they help reps improve results. It's a nice touch if they like you, too, but that's not the deciding factor.

Right now you might be scratching your head thinking, "But my top reps are prima donnas. They want more from me, they have more customer problems and they complain about processes a whole lot more than my other reps."

If so, that's not unusual. High performers want more from you because they want the road slick, to enable selling at their capacity. They may have more customer problems because they have more orders! And they may complain more because every administrative bump can decrease their earnings.

Is it your job to give them only as much time as you give to others?

According to Gallup, no! A manager's job is to make that road smoother for them, even if you're giving them more than their share of time. After all, you're protecting a big revenue stream, and you're working at keeping those high producers on your payroll, not the competitor's.

Besides wanting to hold onto top producers because of the revenue impact, there is another critical reason. The customers of your highest producers are statistically much more loyal than other customers! They bring more revenue and more customer loyalty to your newspaper.

How do you know whether you're providing your top producers, and your team as a whole, what they need? How can you make sure you're influencing them in effective ways?

It's easy: Ask them. Whether you ask in a one-on-one meeting, in a group meeting or with a survey, ask them!

But do not ask, "Am I doing all right for you?"

Instead, ask, "What can I specifically do better or differently to help you sell more and enjoy your job?"

At first they might joke uncomfortably and answer, "Lower my quota!"

If so, laugh and continue with "Seriously, I'm evaluating myself, and I really need your insights." You might be amazed at their perceptions.

Whether positive or negative, apply your newfound knowledge, because you certainly can and do make a difference!

Next month we'll discuss what salespeople specifically want from you, Powerful Manager.

Unleash Your Sales DNA® is a sales effectiveness company that provides extraordinary and unique technology that drives extraordinary and lasting results.

For information, contact Jeffrie Story at 877-378-5580 or story@jeffrie.com

www.UnleashYourSalesDNA.com

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